

# Public Health Preparedness and Response for Bioterrorism

*CDC/Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Initiative Update*

**FEBRUARY 2001**

## State/Local Spotlight

### **Overview of Massachusetts Health Alert Network Portal**

The Health Alert Network (HAN) Portal will provide secure web-based communications and data exchange between the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and its key partners. Initially, the system will be used to alert, analyze, control and prevent infectious disease emergencies throughout the Commonwealth. However, it is designed in a modular format that will allow expansion for other functionality in the future. The design allows for both portal and application-level user access privileges to be implemented. Each user views a customized portal homepage based on their individual access privileges. Users who need access to sensitive and/or personally identifiable information will use a high-authentication (SecureID) protocol to access the site. In its first phase, the system will allow:

1. Notification of key users when a health emergency occurs via pager, and notification of all other appropriate users via email and website posting.
2. Secure access to trainings, news, official forms and other documents and information that are critical to communicable disease outbreak response.
3. A shared real-time system for managing disease outbreaks between the Department of Public Health and the local Boards of Health in each Massachusetts municipality via secure discussion forums.
4. A real-time updateable directory of all users (LDAP).
5. Decentralized content management via web browsers.

The HAN portal has been designed to be compliant with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) and the National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (NEDSS) standards and will serve as the foundation for many NEDSS element development initiatives. It will also serve as a key conduit for secure communication and data-sharing with our partners for other public health initiatives such as local health tobacco control activities, emergency medical services coordination, and influenza pandemic planning and response. The system structure will also allow for regionalization of the portal to multiple states if desired.

Additional functions to be added to the Health Alert Network over the next two years include:

1. Web-based data entry and analysis functions for reportable communicable diseases. Including, direct secure real-time access for local boards of health to shared statewide communicable disease case management data (NEDSS-compliant).
2. Ambulance diversion alerts for use by hospitals and ambulance services.
3. Online multimedia trainings for individuals involved in health emergencies and other related public health activities.
4. Secure access to web-based tools to assist users in managing and analyzing infectious disease and/or bioterrorist threats in the Commonwealth.
5. Secure one-to-one and one-to-many messaging.

The system is designed to allow additional modules and/or functionality to be added as needed. Such future purposes could include:

1. Enhanced surveillance systems
2. Comprehensive online training programs
3. Expansion of the system for use by multiple states

For further information feel free to contact Tim Broadbent at [timothy.broadbent@state.ma.us](mailto:timothy.broadbent@state.ma.us).

Below is a screen shot of the HAN portal homepage (functional design only):



### CDC Update

- Updated smallpox vaccine recommendations were approved by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) on February 21, 2001. Upon completion of final revisions, the recommendations will be published in the MMWR. The tentative date for publication is May or June 2001.
- PHS Region VII representatives, in collaboration with CDC and state and local professionals, are facilitating a regional bioterrorism meeting in Kansas City, MO, March 5-6. This innovative planning effort is intended to encourage communication and cooperation among local, state, and federal partners in the region in order to establish a more comprehensive approach to bioterrorism preparedness and response.
- The CDC public bioterrorism website is undergoing major revisions and is expected to be operational by mid-March. The updated site will be located at [www.bt.cdc.gov](http://www.bt.cdc.gov).
- Profiles of CDC-funded state and local bioterrorism programs have been developed and will be posted to the public website. The profiles provide an overview of accomplishments, plans for the future, and contact information, and will be updated regularly to reflect recent state and local progress.

### **Upcoming Events**

- Mar. 7-9, 2001      National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) Bioterrorism and Emergency Response Committee Meeting: *Logistics Information*, Kansas City, MO
- Mar. 19-22, 2001    A National Workshop on Domestic Preparedness & Counter-Terrorism/An Integrated Effort, New Orleans, LA, sponsored by Texas A&M University, <http://www.wmdnationalworkshop.com/default.asp>
- Apr. 10-11, 2001    2nd National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (NEDSS) Stakeholders' Meeting, Atlanta, GA
- Apr. 21-25, 2001    National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) Conference, Dallas, TX, <http://www.ndms.dhhs.gov>
- Apr. 23-27, 2001    50<sup>th</sup> Annual Epidemic Intelligence Service Scientific Conference, Atlanta, GA, <http://www.cdc.gov/epo/index.htm>

### **Bibliography of Recent Publications**

*Medical Management of Biological Casualties Handbook, Fourth Edition*, U.S. Army Medical Research Institute for Infectious Disease, Feb. 2001, <http://www.wmdnationalworkshop.com/default.asp>

Office of the Inspector General Audit Report: *Management of National Guard Weapons of Mass Destruction-Civil Support Teams* -- Report No. D-2001-043 (PDF), Jan. 31, 2001; <http://www.dodig.osd.mil> .

*Road Map for National Security: Imperative for Change*, The United States Commission on National Security/21st Century, Jan. 31, 2001, <http://www.nssg.gov>

Stein-Spencer L: "Assessing hospitals and local health departments emergency preparedness to a bioterrorism event - Illinois' experience," *The Beacon*, Feb. 2001; 3:5, <http://www.ndpo.gov/beacon/2001/feb2001.pdf>.

*United States Government Interagency Domestic Terrorism Concept of Operations Plan (CONPLAN)*, <http://www.fema.gov/r-n-r/conplan>.